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ABSTRACT

In the 1960s, most individuals engaged in adult education in Great Britain were romantics in the sense that they considered the impetus of the field to be not just to remedy deficits, make up for inadequate educational resources in the broader society, or meet new needs but also to make learning part of the process of social change itself. Self-selection was advocated as the only student selection criterion, and the number of social and recreational courses provided increased significantly. In January 1970, the British government's Inspectorate held a retreat devoted to critical analysis of the knowledge, insights, and competencies expected of professional adult educators. Such critical analysis marked a break with the liberal romantic tradition. The mid-70s also marked the beginning of a change in attitudes toward adult education that eventually evolved into a "modernist" philosophy/policy endorsing formal, work-related, instrumental opportunities at the expense of broader educational opportunities. An adult education system in which lifelong learning is incorporated into a broad educational system that is considered the focal point of individual and social development leading to a "truly learning society" has been proposed an alternative to the narrowly concentrated adult education now supported and encouraged by the British government. (MN)

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Lifelong Learning: Thirty Years of Educational Change

Arthur Stock

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A L L

The Association for Lifelong Learning rejects the common assumption that education equals school, and

- Argues that young people must leave school competent and confident enough to want to go on learning.
- Asserts that in Britain too many do not, and that we cannot afford this waste of time and talent.
- Provides a forum for those interested in lifelong learning to discuss their ideas at conferences, meetings and through publications.
- Acts as an interest group seeking to ensure that educational change incorporates the principle of learning throughout life.

So **A L L** works to . . .

- Achieve a radical but principled reform of compulsory schooling.
- Establish a coherent, comprehensive system of tertiary education after 16.
- Extend information and guidance systems to help people make the best of what is available.
- Ensure wider and more relevant learning opportunities for adults.
- Create financial support systems to help those in need to return to learning.
- Convince politicians and voters that knowledge is the basis of democracy and that lifelong access to it should be a public responsibility and a citizen's right.

Full details of the Association's aims, membership benefits and subscription rates are available from the Association for Lifelong Learning, c/o Adult Education Department, University Park, Nottingham NG7 2RD.

Lifelong Learning: Thirty Years of Educational Change

Arthur Stock

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Editor's Preface

Nick Small

The Association for Lifelong Learning is grateful to Arthur Stock for adapting and updating his 1991 lecture to the world of 1993, and transposing it from the spoken to the written word. In the rapidly changing scene of education in Britain, this essay attempts a longer term view of provision for the education of adults. It is reflective, applies an historical perspective to the last thirty years, and offers an analysis and classification of change over that time.

The essay attributes a 'romantic' outlook to practitioners in the 1960's and 1970's, suggesting the philosophy that lay behind the commitment. In the second half, the 'modernism' of more recent times is described. The final part sketches a future scenario. Here, the reader may take issue, categorise that outlook as romantic, modern or use any other label, and meditate upon what is desirable and what is necessary; and why. Underlying this essay is the issue of what education is for, the purpose it should serve and consequently its role in our society as it approaches the twenty-first century. The questions themselves are ancient enough; how realistic is the answer?

A L L

A welcome is extended to all those in the broad field of lifelong learning, continuing, adult, post-compulsory, etc., education to join the Association. As Arthur Stock's Introduction points out, there is growing endorsement of instrumental education for adults. The Association is happy to help redress the balance on the voluntary side, and to promote it as an integral part of national educational provision. The Association's publications are designed to promote well informed debate on the case for the lifelong dimension in future educational provision. If you want to discuss, or have items for, publication, please get in touch with Nick Small, ALL Publications Secretary, Open University, Fairfax House, Leeds LS2 8JU, telephone 0532 444431.

Lifelong Learning: Thirty Years of Educational Change

Arthur Stock

1 Introduction

This essay began life as part of the 1991 Centenary Lecture Programme celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the founding of the University of Manchester's School of Education. The title agreed to by the organisers of the Programme was *Continuing Education for Adults: from Romanticism to Modernism in Twenty Difficult Years.*

In presenting the lecture, I attempted to identify significant elements of recent and contemporary history which had contributed to the present paradoxical situation in which education for adults finds itself today: a situation where there is growing endorsement for and take up of formal, often work-related, always *instrumental* education for adults; but where the accessible, joyful, neighbourhood-based, 'cultural' adult education is either being closed down entirely or operated as very high priced private or public enterprise aimed at the upper socio-economic segments.

Perhaps I should comment a little more on the original title. The words are entirely of my own choosing - so I have no legitimate complaint, except against myself for becoming entangled with this fascinating but rather over-demanding cultural analogy. The romanticist/modernist contrast arrived in my mind whilst I was analysing the ever more disparate (or fragmented) range of modern educational provision for adults, at the same time as I was being pressed by Pro Vice Chancellor John Turner to offer a title for this Centenary Programme. Having been battered by the realities of current modernism, the contrast with the apparent certainties of past adult education days immediately suggested the parallel, though historically much earlier transition from romanticism and the *belle epoque* to the harsher, more demanding cultural micro-climates of (say) Cubism and Dadaism in the visual arts and (say) Messiaen and Schoenberg in music.

I should finally say that the 'twenty difficult years' referred to in the original version are still very much with us, even more so in 1993 than at

the time of delivering the lecture. The empirical evidence of enrolment statistics indicates that academic year 1975/76 was the apogee of numbers of people participating in locally available, general education for adults. Never, since that year, have there been as many of those 'community' adult education students, nor even as many when the several special-programme target-group members are added in. There is assumed to be an increase in systematic adult vocational education and training, at least as far as can be gathered from the quite inadequate statistical information available. However, it could be argued that the attraction of many traditional non-participants to tailor-made adult learning programmes has substantially improved the profile of participation; and that although the total numbers are lower than they should be, the distribution is better.

Whatever the judgement on current levels and types of participation, we may be certain that the present picture is very different from that of the early to mid 70s. Whether the service is better or worse in terms of what is needed for individuals, groups and a nation-state at this point in history we may defer for later arguments. From the analysis attempted in this paper, we may infer that it is hardly good enough: and international comparative perspectives suggest that other near neighbours in Europe as well as countries further afield are investing much more in education and training for adults, often from a diversity of sources.

2 Romanticism

Clive James, the well-known broadcaster and critic, has claimed (*Clive James Interview*, BBC2, 17 February 1991), "You have to have been a romantic to be a realist". And certainly the majority of us engaged in education for adults, whether part-time or full-time during the 1950s, '60s and early '70s, were romantics in the best cultural sense of the term. We believed we were doing something 'worthwhile', in the immortal, question begging words of educational philosopher Hurst. As many of us had come from more rigid and traditional sectors of education, we recognised stimulating trends towards equity and democracy in the conduct and even the organisation of parts of adult education; we were aware of universalist - even populist - claims for adult education which harmonised with our socio-ethical perspectives; and moreover, during the 1960s we were encouraged by the governing political ethos and even administrative fiat, to be aware of and relate to 'neighbourhood',

'community', 'the disadvantaged', 'individual and group needs'. Not only were we in an expanding service, we were on the side of the angels too! In a sense we had inherited the 'social consciousness' of previous generations of adult educators, such as Albert Mansbridge founder of the so many adult education institutions as well as the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), who believed fervently that a rigorous voluntary education by and for 'workers' would be a major engine of social and political change. The difference was that we were busy marketing its programmes and classes in a hyperactive but undiscriminating way to a larger audience than that envisaged in the latter-day notion of 'Workers' Education'. The change is symbolised in mirror-image form in Raymond Williams's 1983 *Tony McLean Memorial Lecture* (1) when he recalls G D H Cole's outburst at a 1950s meeting of the Oxford Delegacy for Extra-Mural Studies. "I don't give a damn about Adult Education, I am only interested in Workers' Education", said Cole; and, although this was undoubtedly a throwback to an older tradition, unaware of the new demands and new horizons, impatient perhaps of the new 'respectability' demanded of the trade, it harmonises with the romanticist belief of many adult educators: that their work was part of 'social transformation'. Williams again, in the same lecture, puts his finger unerringly upon the source of this in-built credo of three post-war decades, when he says (2):

> **. . . the impulse to Adult Education was not only a matter of remedying deficit, making up for inadequate educational resources in the wider society, nor only a case of meeting new needs in the society, though those things contributed. The deepest impulse was the desire to make learning part of the process of social change itself.**

To much of this 'wider' adult education especially as promulgated in the universities, a pre-existing label was attached, namely liberal education which, in spite of a vast 19th century and 20th century literature expounding or merely using the term, has never to my mind been satisfactorily defined. As a concept label, however vague, it received reinforcement from two quite disparate sources: on the one hand the long-running traditional liberal/vocational antithesis (or rather the tedious arguments surrounding it); and on the other from the so-called Responsible Body (RB) grant regulations which resulted, on occasions, in university extra mural departments studiously committed to teaching foreign cultures, but studiously avoiding teaching foreign languages.

A further strengthening of this ethically based romantic period of

education for adults, notably in the 1950s and early 1960s, was achieved by the vast outpouring in the relevant journals of the time about the Great Tradition: albeit that this was mostly confined to university adult education - though not entirely. The Great Tradition centred upon a partnership between WEA Districts and appropriate regional universities whereby the WEA identified programme elements and also recruited students for the classes, and the local friendly University provided, for the most part, the teaching staff. In addition, as Professor Harold Wiltshire noted in a 1956 article (3).

> **. . . the only selection used is self-selection, and it is assumed that if you are interested enough to attend the course and competent enough to meet its demands then you are a suitable student.**

What a marvellously romantic statement, exuding liberation as well as liberality; but the now-understood barriers implied by the phrase "competent enough to meet its demands" when projected some thirty seven years later, indicate its limitations as a principle for the present day. It certainly seems unlikely that Professor Wiltshire would have wished to enter upon the competency-based education and training of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications which is a constant (though many would say inadequate) stimulus to much professional thinking and course development in the 90s.

Even for the then newly re-invented university extension programmes of the 1950s - the forerunners of so much continuing education of the 1980s - a romantic liberality was frequently claimed, as J W Saunders exemplified in a 1959 article (4) about such courses:

> **They are liberal, because even with courses established with vocational groups it is now generally recognised by the leaders of various professions that the best vocational asset that a man can have is a non-vocational liberal education.**

The sheer romantic arrogance of this statement - apart from its period sexism - quite takes one's breath away, especially the, at least in my experience, totally unwarranted assumption about the liberal education beliefs of "leaders of various professions".

However, throughout the 1950s and well into the 1960s there emerged increasingly the view that the only paradigm in which 'proper' adult education could be judged was the liberal paradigm. Norman Jepson of Leeds University (5), writing in the book edited by Raybould (1959), ambitiously titled *Trends in English Adult Education*', notes the growth in

local authority promoted education for adults, in the following terms:

> **Likewise, with the tremendous increase in the provision of social and recreational courses, there was the challenge to re-examine the precise function and value of such courses within the framework of liberal adult education.**

Looking back at that era from the broken glass and dereliction of the 1990s it appears like a garden of Eden, without even a wicked serpent but with merely a pompous slow-moving lizard irritatingly denigrating the jungle-like growth and development of Local Education Authority (LEA) provision.

Perhaps the reality of my romantic era of adult education was what Raymond Williams (6) identifies as the paramount malaise of the nineteenth century Oxford and Cambridge Extension Movement, when he says:

> **. . . they believed they were taking understanding to people. Not taking the tools of understanding; not taking the results of certain organised learning; not putting these into a process which would then be an interaction with what was often very solid experience in areas in which the learned were in fact ignorant; but rather a taking of learning itself, humanity itself. It is surprising how often in the writings of that period people whose individual lives we can respect, talk about 'humanising' or 'refining' people - of course mostly poor people. But the fact is that the real situation was never of that kind.**

Of course, it was all done kindly and with good intent; but it is clear that the approach and the style were based on at best a blurred image through romantic spectacles, and at worst pure ignorance. The grand romantic assumptions of liberal educators or even those of the Great Tradition frequently did not accord and interrelate successfully with the real world of ordinary working people.

There was, nevertheless, for most adult educators a powerful synthesis of ethic, capability and faith which carried over from the University and WEA activists to many of the growing number of full-time professionals working in the LEA sector. And that's where the growth was occurring: rapidly accelerating growth in the 1960s. Nationally, between 1961 and 1968, the average rate of growth was around nine per cent a year. In Lancashire, where I was working through much of that decade, the annual rate of expansion was nearer to 11 per cent. LEAs assumed that all the elements of further and adult education - including the financial

resource - would constantly expand. There was a compliant expectation in many authorities of mid-year over-spending of budgets, with any criticism being countered by the claim that there would be inevitable under-spending when course closures or amalgamations through 'drop-out' occurred. For almost fifteen years (with only one major 'cuts' hiatus in 1968/70), a balmy climate of acceptance prevailed: that what was identified in further and adult education as needed would, more or less, be provided

Of course, when one peers back through the nostalgia and selective memories of that time, the blemishes and limitations emerge. For example, the staff training and development, particularly for the growing army of part-time tutors (probably 150,000 in England and Wales by 1970), was, in most authorities and institutions, either grossly inadequate or non-existent. Even in the most strongly defended university redoubts of the Great Tradition, there appeared to be consistent if not universal rejection of a requirement and provision for the competence of teaching staff, in educational if not academic terms. The University of Manchester and, indeed, some authorities in the North West, East Midlands and Yorkshire regions, were unusual in offering in-service part-time and full-time courses for adult education teachers and organisers. But these were largely ignored or avoided by the rank-and-file in university extra-mural departments and the WEA, even though the headquarters managers of those bodies frequently offered cooperation in promotion and development. My own survey of the adult educational training scene in North West England of 1967/68 indicated limited but growing enthusiasm for training by LEA employed tutors, but general dismissal by Responsible Body tutors.

Incidentally, and as a sign of the times, that same North-West region-wide research indicated a primitive faith by most of the tutor-respondents in hints and tips by subject-experts as being the most desirable element of training courses. One might also note that 42 per cent of that fairly representative sample of the 1960s were trained school teachers (notoriously difficult to persuade to enter on in-service courses for adult work).

It is fair to say that the authorities and institutions of the region now have a totally different mind-set to staff-training and development, which is seen as a key instrumental necessity for quality provision.

Generally speaking, the 'romantic' era generated rather cavalier

attitudes and assumptions - especially in administrators - about tutors of adults. These were partly a product of the marginality of that sector of the educational service and partly an historic inheritance of the styles of teaching and organisation in the late 19th and early 20th century, continued between the two World Wars. The basic assumption was that, if tutors were reasonably well qualified in 'subject' terms, then they would be able to teach 'their subject' to the untutored students who signed up for the essentially subject-based courses. Subsequent research related to tutor-training indicated that many tutors recruited on this basis and encouraged to venture into classrooms, presented their material in a fashion modelled on a favourite teacher or lecturer of their own formal education experience. 'Presentation' was the dominant mode, although 'interactive' mode and some 'search' mode, especially in certain Responsible Body classes, were introduced. Indeed, many student groups were conditioned to expect hefty loads of straight lecturing-type presentation. I well remember the 1960s wise warning of a senior colleague at Manchester University on his receiving my highly active (and interactive) prescription for handling a fill-in class (because of the tutor's illness) at a local WEA branch. "If you don't lecture for at least the first fifty minutes," he said, "they will not consider they've had their money's worth, especially as you're an unknown substitute." His insight into the expectations of the group was only too accurate and I modified my plan accordingly. I hasten to add that the faults exemplified by this anecdote lay much more with my own naivete - and possibly previous tutors' conservatism - than any intransigence on the part of the students.

Amidst all this waywardness and occasional gross ineptitude there was, nevertheless, an acceptance in this country that a range of locally available and reasonably accessible educational provision for adults was a justifiable expectation in all communities. Whilst other countries, in the later 60s and early 70s, were incorporating 'rights' and 'quotas' and 'ratios' into new legislation for adult education, the British formula whereby most local authorities accepted broad catchment area responsibilities to provide education for adults within a loose framework law was much admired by many continental neighbours. Our 'decentralised' system was seen as more democratic, more responsive than their over-centralised, if pluralistic provision; and their local or municipal commitment was often small or non-existent.

The British apprehensions about the already emerging gross disparities

of range, levels, resources and staffing, as between local education authorities up and down the country, were frequently brushed aside by continental colleagues who only visited the 'good guys' amongst authorities and institutions and were carefully steered around the 'bad guys' by hosting organisations.

Out of this experience of growing catchment area development emerged a species of working theory which began to inform the practice of the field professionals. Initiatives such as the Manchester Seminars organised by the Adult Education Department of Manchester University, plus regional and national focused events throughout the country, became a valuable feature of the adult education scene. There was, in short, a rising concern for quality improvement - it might currently be called quality management - in what many a modernist might otherwise term a rag-bag scenario.

In January 1970, Her Majesty's Inspectorate invited a group of interested academics, local authority inspectors, staff trainers, broadcasters and representatives of voluntary bodies to a New Year 'retreat' at Sydney Sussex College in Cambridge. One major purpose of the exercise was to explore what knowledge, insights and competences might be expected of a professional adult educator. The Report which appeared (never officially published by DES) was rather grandly titled, *Explorations*. It offered a variety of useful insights, not least that a competent professional adult educator needed to understand about community networks, about their nature, strengths, frequency and importance, and how needs-based programmes could be related to or even help to build such networks.

In many ways, such critical analysis marked a break with the liberal romantic tradition. The 'social motives' of programme planning and recruitment were frequently based at best on the predilections of a group such as a WEA branch or at worst on the qualifications or subject preferences of an organising tutor.

The ultimate moral imperatives of the romantic era had actually been encapsulated long before in the convinced prose of the *1919 Report* (Report of the Adult Education Committee to the Ministry of Reconstruction in 1919, paragraph 330):

> **The adult educational movement is inextricably interwoven with the whole organised life of the community. Whilst on the one hand it originates in a desire amongst individuals for adequate opportunities**

for self-expression and the cultivation of their personal powers and interests, it is, on the other hand, rooted in the social aspirations of the democratic movements of the country. In other words it rests upon the twin principles of personal development and social service. It aims at satisfying the needs of the individual and at the attainment of new standards of citizenship and a better social order. In some cases the personal motive predominates. In perhaps the greater majority of cases the dynamic character of adult education is due to its social motive.

Thus the generalised 'social motive' - idealistic and essentially rather vague, but nevertheless purposive and inspirational - was a core element, almost the *leit motif* in liberal education for adults, for almost exactly 100 years. Nor is the spirit dead today, although official recognition and endorsement of its value has diminished rapidly in these last 15 years, threatening and often extinguishing organisations and institutions. The recent tragic demise of the long-cherished and purpose-built College of Adult Education in the city of Manchester is a case in point: and the wholesale butchery of local, community adult education together with the changes in emphasis in university extra-mural departments are current manifestations of governments' - local and central - lack of commitment to general/liberal education for adults.

Even in the academic world of professional philosophers a sinister version of liberalism and liberal education known in the trade as deontological liberalism has appeared. Rawls and Nozick writing in the 1970s provided a rationale derived in part from Locke and Kant, for the ultra individualism of the 1980s. As Dr Kenneth Lawson of Nottingham University has noted: (7)

(Deontological liberalism) is a philosophy suited to a society which has no vision . . . where monetary values define worthwhileness.

It may be worth asking ourselves whether liberal adult educators have exacerbated the situation by apparently avoiding educational value questions. It is fashionable to say that adult education is about *process* not content. This is an eminently deontological view!

3 Modernism

What then do governments support, if anything? And when and how did the change take place? Taking the 'when' and 'how' first, one can identify a period during the mid-1970s when the Russell Report,

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essentially a social-purpose, liberal document which appeared in 1973, was effectively rejected by two different administrations of central government, even though some of its findings were implemented by local government. An adult literacy campaign, coordinated by the British Association of Settlements and supported by many voluntary bodies, the National Institute of Adult Education and the Association of Teachers in Technical Institutions, culminated in political and financial endorsement by central government of *special* adult literacy programmes in summer 1974; and the setting up in 1975 under the auspices of the National Institute of a special purpose but narrowly framed Adult Literacy Resource Agency (ALRA). Furthermore, there appeared in 1976 the *Venables Report on Continuing Education*, ostensibly addressed to its instigators and sponsors, the Open University. More than half of it, however, was addressed to central and local government, to industry and to the country at large. The *Venables Report* defined in detail a comprehensive view of *continuing education* which gave as much kudos and emphasis to vocational education and role education as it did to 'balancing education', which was more-or-less 'liberal'.

At that time, as Director of the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, I visited the corridors of power in Westminster and Elizabeth House (then Department of Education and Science). I became increasingly aware that a combination of the demonstrable success in its field of a highly focused social policy-related agency such as ALRA, plus the growing awareness of the *utility* of focused continuing education in a number of Departments of Government *besides the DES*, was resulting in a very different perspective on education for adults. The idealistic but nevertheless holistic view of education for adults which had prevailed in the Education Ministry for some long time, was changing to an alternative instrumental, targeted form.

Part of the changing attitudes informing these views, over a decade from the late sixties to late seventies, can be judged from the reported comment of a Permanent Secretary of the earlier date, when approached about the establishment of the Russell Committee: "Why should we be bothered with this minor marginal educational manifestation called adult education?"

However, it is also reported that a Deputy Permanent Secretary of that time stated, in his opposition to 'Russell': "If we once open the floodgates, we'll never get them closed again". Possibly these actual words are apocryphal, but I'm sure they reflect both major (and minor)

styles of mandarin thinking of the decade.

When the post-Russell, post-Venables campaign for a National Development Council for Adult Education was put before a cabinet committee in the 1970s, it received a *coup de grace* from another mandarin, said to be Treasury, who regarded the inclusion of the word 'development' in the title as " . . . signing a blank cheque for uncontrolled development".

Instead, we were offered the Advisory Council for Adult and Continuing Education (ACACE), which did some excellent exploratory thinking, first-rate surveying and trenchant reporting; but was, by constitution, non-developing. ACACE could analyse, recommend and exhort, but it could not deliver anything, nor even test anything, in the field.

Thus, in answering the 'When' and 'How' questions referred to above, we may be certain that there was a sea-change in the perception of both central and local government as to what constituted 'useful' education for adults; and for most this meant basic education, ie. for full literate and numerate capability and participation, plus:

- English language capability for immigrants
- vocational and pre-vocational education and training
- some instrumental education to cope with life-changes, such as retirement, unemployment, and re-training.

Furthermore, as the finance for *general* adult education in the 70s and 80s was reduced, the informing criterion-linked adjective became 'justifiable' rather than 'useful'.

This is not to say that all locally available general education for adults had disappeared during these latter difficult years. For many authorities, institutions and individual college principals or centre-heads, the answer was, in part or in whole, to turn to market forces. Fees, once regarded as necessarily minimal, in many cases soared from an average of about 25 pence per student hour in the mid-70s to a current average of around 120 pence per student hour. Moreover, the exercise of what is politely called 'virement' whereby well-patronised, high-fee courses supplement or subsidise less popular courses, or in some cases contribute towards discretionary fees for low-income students, became fashionable.

This, whilst weakening the public financial base of general liberal education for adults, has also contributed to the wilful diversity of the service, and its costs, from one authority to another. It has also led to

the virtually total breakdown of inter-authority transfer of adult students, except for rare or high-cost vocational courses.

Into this melancholy twilight of general adult education was injected a further element of policy, causing the ultimate dilemma for committed adult education workers. I refer to the ever proliferating number of special social and economic oriented, adult learning programmes backed by many departments of Government: Department of Employment; Manpower Services Commission; subsequently Training Agency, now Training, Enterprise and Education Directorate (TEED); Department of Health; Home Office; Department of the Environment; Department of Energy; Department of Trade and Industry, and *even* the Department of Education and Science, all specifically financed, sometimes specifically staffed. Many of these programmes addressed *needs* close to the hearts of adult education professionals. Yet they were limited and narrow and often short term. What was a concerned adult educator to do?

Thus, the 'modernist' reality of a majority of endorsed and funded education for adults is wholesale fragmentation. During the 'romantic era', as I have called it, there was, at least, some degree of holism in the concepts and precepts which informed the work of adult educators, even though organisational cooperation and collaboration was never easy. Nowadays in its most extreme form, the fragmentation can produce, in some English and Welsh authorities, a 'private army' syndrome, where the quite numerous educators of adults are marshalled into separately named and organised cohorts such as health educators, neighbourhood workers, basic education workers, rehabilitation workers, ethnic minority specialists etc. etc. etc.; and, perhaps the saddest thing of all, in several of these same authorities, they hardly ever communicate from one 'army' to another. In the worst case actual hostilities break out. The 'fragmentation' may be further encouraged by the 'divided responsibility' nature of the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act, which places a majority of education for adults with the Colleges of Further Education, but leaves certain important areas of provision with the Local Authorities.

Whilst the cultural analogy of the original title of this paper is by no means perfect or historically accurate, one does see some similarity to the emergence of the multiplicity of schools of painting and other visual arts during the 1920s and 30s - and the 1960s and 70s - whose common denominators appeared to be their rejection of earlier or even other contemporary schools and their ephemeral existence in time. In this regard we must mourn the more recent demise of the excellent

REPLAN (Educational Opportunities for Unemployed Adults) programme which closed in 1991.

In public education for adults there was a further body-blow which was a product of sins of omission and commission. In spite of hundreds of representations about the importance of a coherent service of education for adults, there was little comprehension or consequent amendment demonstrated by the Government in its steam-rollering of the 1988 Education Reform Act through the Houses of Parliament. The result was a woefully weak legislative position of education for adults. When this weakness encountered the lethal fall-out of actual or threatened poll-tax capping (and rate-capping before it and Council Tax capping after it), the results were catastrophic. Formerly sound, active purveyors of good services of community adult education were savaged by elected members desperate to avoid central government's 'capping' axe poised over their heads. It was an appalling comment on our times when an almost totally discredited local tax legislation was able to assault and ruin so many worthwhile features of local life and community.

The inevitable casualties were the life-enhancing, equity-related, enriching, satisfying, supporting forms of job-unrelated, neighbourhood-available general adult education. But more too was made to suffer: because many of the special purpose, endorsed continuing education programmes of the recent past, plus the priorities of the immediate future, have been carried on the emaciated frame of the general adult education service. If this service is finally starved to death, or summarily despatched to the knackers yard, then many of the glamorous special programmes are in great danger.

Thus, 'modernism' in many of its manifestations brings us to the supreme irony of our present adult educational times: when there has been more instrumental acceptance of the societal importance of education for adults than ever in history, as exemplified by all the disparate promotions of the many departments of government: but when the essential and basic educational structure is falling to pieces around us, like the broken windows of abandoned buildings. In this respect, as other commentators have noted, education for adults replicates the totally fragmented cultural landscape of this country following the devastation of the 1980s.

This Gotterdamerung scenario is neither total nor inevitable. There has been some good news in the trade in recent years, and the HM

Inspectorate Review, *Education for Adults*, in the DES *Education Observed* series (8), puts a brave face on current difficulties.

The Review praises the highly motivated adult students, the dedicated teaching force, the high incidence of good quality teaching and learning, quick response to identified needs, a wide variety of course provision at different levels, a range of local delivery points.

In spite of well-bred inhibitions in HMI reporting, the Review does emphasise a number of the current ailments in the service:

- *a failure to clarify aims and objectives*; for this one could substitute: 'weakening of local responsibilities and resources and superimposition of transitory national political objectives - often purely cosmetic'.
- *wide variation in the amount of provision made by different LEAs*; there's no arguing with that.
- *inadequate machinery to identify local needs and to plan, monitor and evaluate provision*; the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992 must weaken the LEAs' duty to do those things.
- *barely adequate accommodation and equipment*; that must be either an averaged or plainly generous assessment.
- *management deficiencies due to the low ratio of full-time to part-time staff*; and the ratio has deteriorated drastically in many LEAs following the transfer of nearly all 'Schedule 2' work to the Colleges of Further Education.

I should further wish to emphasise a number of other bright spots in the otherwise darkening landscape:

- *Open learning systems* of a varied responsive and sophisticated character are attracting many individuals and groups (including employers/employees) to systematic learning with a high degree of flexibility offered to the student.
- More *adults* are enrolling in rather better produced and better accessed *further and higher education*; the skilled design and management of adult-friendly part-time and/or modular courses in institutions of further and higher education is a major contribution to this welcome trend. We should note the growth of Assessment of Prior Learning, too, in this connection.
- *Educational guidance and counselling for adults* has achieved a

moral and intellectual victory - after fifteen years of report, demonstration and exhortation by ACACE, and particularly the Unit for the Development of Adult Continuing Education (UDACE) - in that a clear majority of LEAs have free-standing educational guidance services for adults (EGSAs) and many colleges have incorporated educational guidance services as a central feature, not merely a bolt-on, into their post-ERA structures. However, two cheers only, as many EGSAs are still very financially fragile.

- Focused, social purpose education for specific adult *target groups* has often been very successful within the confines of the respective groups: but, with the possible exceptions of Adult Basic Education and, temporarily, the REPLAN programme, this strategy has not yet proved itself in a societal improvement or societal transformation way.

- More systematic and purposeful *staff development*, including the conceptual and operational development beyond mere 'training'.

- The development of open offers of supported general education for adults by the Ford Motor Company, through its Employee Development and Assistance Programme (EDAP), in the UK, by Motorola, General Motors and many other companies in the USA and other private sector organisations in Germany, Switzerland and Japan.

4 The Future

There has always been a tendency when adult educators get together to bemoan the alleged lack of coherent theory which would not only underpin our thinking about the work but would convince the many doubting purse-holders and power-brokers.

Theory there certainly is; but like the provision itself this theory is rather fragmented, or even compartmentalised within the several academic disciplines which feed into the study of education for adults.

This is not the right circumstance to derive splendid, insightful, theoretical paradigms for this purpose in this present paper. Suffice to say that part of the original semi-articulated model of the liberal educators of old, of the seeking, searching individual learning to understand and change a hostile social milieu has received some

reinforcement by recent research.

For example Kelly's Personal Construct Theory of Learning which - put rather simply - stresses the reality of individuals trying to make sense of a complex world, and then *constructing their own knowledge and understanding of it*, is of paramount importance. It reinforces the long-held belief among many of us that education and training regimes, programmes and courses which do *not* contribute to this constant effort of 'personal construction', will not do very well. Or to put it another way, the insistence by course sponsors or purchasers upon what will be often perceived as arbitrary or irrelevant externally imposed learning goals and objectives (frequently somebody else's interpretations of the economic, manpower or social-conformity notions of the power people of our society) will only achieve minority success, as indicated by high drop out rates, failures in required competency and loss of confidence.

This idiographic or personal side of the model interacts with the nomothetic or societal/institutional/political/managerial factors on the other side which so much influence the present-day patterns of our educational institutions, as also to a considerable extent their curricula. In passing, one should note there are still some colleges so dominated by these purely nomothetic elements that the individuality, the personal growth, the construction of usable knowledge which are intrinsic to the idiographic side, are non-existent in the working of their organisations. In short, you then have an education/training factory which, no matter what apparent success is achieved as judged by external assessment, will have poor real and usable learning productivity. Such may well contribute to the frequently diagnosed malaise in British industry and society.

Even with the wholesale realisation, indeed acceptance, of the current inadequacies , the necessary wholesale reforms needed to achieve a proper learning society in the United Kingdom are unlikely to be achieved within this century, although the recently published National Education and Training Targets may be a contribution to this. It may need a decade of the next century before radically different international social, political and economic comparisons and indicators will stimulate the required reappraisal and ultimate 'real' change. In the meantime there will probably be constant tinkering, mostly with the formal school system, and a continuation of the adoption of limited policy or programme learning projects outside the schools.

But we should still plan and organise for the necessary reforms, whether for the near or medium term. The following trends may take place in the not-too-distant future, partly because the usual motors of social policy development - demography, technology, economics and culture, particularly gender and multi-ethnic factors will put pressure on people and d establishments to undertake and underwrite them. The other increasingly powerful factor, ideology, may impinge upon the same for good or ill.

- The incorporation of the National Curriculum into the schools, together with much enhanced attainment testing, plus continuing research evidence of declining standards in some elements of basic education, may lead to the development of the notion of a *right* for all persons to achieve certain agreed attainment levels of basic education. In turn, this could result in further *much more evenly distributed* commitments of resource into Adult Basic Education, in contrast to the very uneven distribution of the present time, including, in some cases, to the woefully inadequate.

- The present small beginnings of *work place* based adult education provision could easily develop very rapidly, as understanding grows of the essential necessary educational foundations and thresholds for satisfactory job training and re-training. This is happening already on a very large scale in the United States. United Kingdom companies, factories and commercial employers may then decide to offer more in-house basic and follow-up education themselves, especially if the public sector remains so debilitated.

- *Open learning systems* will probably continue to be a major growth area, but with improved user-friendly packages marketed from many more points-of-sale including local/neighbourhood centres.

- The several active, *campaigning special-interest groups* and pressure groups may also discover the study-circle materials system - or open-learning packages - as a way to inform and stimulate scattered memberships.

- The success of the many *social-support or self-help* forms of education for adults, eg. women's focused adult education or ethnic minorities' provision, may be recognised generically as being of major societal, as well as purely educational significance, and could result in wider application throughout the community.

- There may well be a long-overdue resurgence in *political or quasi-political education* associated, for example, with gradually growing demands for proportional representation and/or a bill of rights, or other fundamental, but presently lacking, aspects of a modern democracy.

- The several pre-retirement, ageing-oriented, trips-for-the elderly, U3A, 'grey-power' organisations may be persuaded to federate (or at least confederate); and jointly to support a new dynamic curriculum stressing the great opportunities of third-age living.

- Multicultural education for adults may become more *positive* in its emphasis instead of producing essentially negative curricula, ie. *anti*-racism, and anti-sexism; not much anti-ageism yet! This whole crucial area of learning and development is finely balanced, and could easily be sabotaged by the combined forces of ignorance, oppression and fundamentalism.

- It seems likely that a whole re-appraisal of the notions of *family and parent education*, ie. education in and in relation to the family, will be necessary particularly in light of the ever-increasing proportions of single parent and other non-traditional family structures. The consequential societal, group and individual adjustments may require much new thinking and new learning to make them work.

- *Euro-factors* are going to impinge even more on education for adults as the inevitable trend towards Euro-integration proceeds; and unless the formal educational system makes huge leaps forward in necessary transformation, there will be a great deal of demand upon post-initial education to try to counter the educational, linguistic and cultural deficiencies which many Britons will carry into European work and life styles.

However, I do forecast an early 21st century re-appraisal of *all* education which should proceed from a life-long learning or *education permanente* perspective. Thus:

- A *learning to enjoy learning stage*, for three to six year olds, non-compulsory fully financed.

- A *basic education stage*, for seven to fourteen year olds, compulsory; but in a curricular sense, and with appropriate methodology, would be available throughout life.

- A *further education stage*, for fifteen to eighteen year olds, *not* compulsory 'schooling', but compulsory registration for varying options of education, training, work-experience, assessed personal learning projects.

- A *higher education stage*, for eighteen to twenty-one year olds (and beyond), much of it 'sandwich', a large proportion modular, with credit-accumulation and transfer inherent throughout. Access based on need, interest and experience in previous education and in life (Assessment of Prior Learning would be intrinsic).

- *Continuing education*, not really a stage, available throughout life on an 'entitlement' basis and financed by a mixture of compulsory personal insurance, payroll tax and personal contributions, these latter to vary in bands according to income. Clearly identifiable day and evening adult-oriented delivery points would be distributed throughout communities on, say, a 1 to 50,000 of population basis; but other educational institutions would also contribute. *All* would be points-of-delivery for approved distance and open learning; all would have guidance and counselling, also personal or group tutoring facilities.

Curricula would be perceived in whole-life terms, for example:

- life enhancing education - cultural, physical, social, civic
- special needs education
- earnings related education
- life-stage changing education, including role education.

The whole reform would be approached with a reawakened sense of the priority and necessary coherence of education, for the health, happiness and growth of the people and the nation-state.

In the terms of my earlier, rather strained, cultural analogy, this would be 'post-modernism', or, in our terms, a truly Learning Society, informed, perhaps, by a new ethic of sharp environmental consciousness.

We must begin again to work for it; although it may be only our children who shall see it.

A L L

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The aim of last year's publication from the Association for Lifelong Learning was to assess the political reality for lifelong learning in the early 1990s. This year, Arthur Stock focuses on the last thirty years of educational provision for adults. He charts the expansion of the 1960s and 1970s, and the motivation and tacit philosophy that lay beneath it. Growth in numbers was the order of the day, both among participants and in variety of provision. In the 1980s came a different central approach that endorsed the formal, the work-related, the instrumental, apparently at the expense of broader educational opportunities. Government support and encouragement of educational provision for adults has become more narrowly concentrated, its nature and purpose changed. Is this to be a permanent condition? In his conclusion, Arthur Stock suggests an alternative, with lifelong learning incorporated into a broad educational system that is understood as a focal point of individual and social development leading to a 'truly Learning Society'.